

Timing of Raid Stirs Uproar at Panther Inquest

By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

CHICAGO, Jan. 9—An inquest into the killing of two Black Panthers during a police raid turned into an angry shouting match today because of an unanswered question about the timing of the raid.

Before the uproar subsided, blacks attending the inquest, including the mother of slain Panther leader Fred Hampton, pressed around a special coroner's bench demanding that a police sergeant be forced to explain the raid's timing.

It was the first time that black observers have registered a strong disapproval of the inquest—an investigation arranged primarily to satisfy their strong doubts about the killings.

A Hampton family lawyer used the word "murders" in describing the shootings, attorneys representing the police screamed objections, and the coroner accused all of them of "yelling like a bunch of ban-shees."

The special coroner's inquest is probing the shooting by police on Dec. 4 of Hampton and Mark Clark, a Peoria Panther Party organizer, in a

West Side apartment during a search for illegal weapons.

The man who led the raiding party of 13 officers, Sgt. Daniel Groth, testified he once had considered staging it at 8 p.m. on Dec. 3, a Wednesday, but instead chose the hour of 4:45 a.m. the following day.

Groth also said he had learned from a police informant that Black Panthers attend political orientation meetings on Wednesday nights—a fact that presumably meant they would not have been at the apartment at 8 p.m.

A lawyer representing Hampton's family pressed Groth to explain why he did not choose the evening hour to avoid the danger of gunfire.

Groth's search warrant called only for confiscation of weapons, not for the arrest of any persons.

Special deputy coroner Martin Gerber refused to have Groth answer the question. The Hamptons' lawyer, Francis Andrew, complained strenuously and in an emotional outburst used the word "murderers."

That brought objections

from state's attorney's lawyers, and Gerber shouted down from the bench, "I don't want to hear any more speeches about murder. The jury will decide that."

Andrew insisted the answer was crucial in determining whether Groth's plans for the raid were calculated to minimize loss of life or danger to either police or the apartment's occupants.

Groth has testified earlier that an early-morning hour was chosen to gain the advantage of surprise.

The Panthers have contended the police staged the action deliberately in the pre-dawn hours, intending to murder Hampton in his sleep.

There had been rumors circulating before the inquest that the police had thought originally of staging an evening search. Groth in effect confirmed that today.

After Gerber adjourned the inquest until Monday, Mrs. Hampton, her other son William, and several other blacks pressed toward Gerber's bench. William Hampton shouted, "The black community is concerned about that. The family of Fred Hampton

is concerned." He slashed his arm through the air in protest and stormed out with his mother.

In Washington, meanwhile, Black Panther lawyer Jerry Lefcourt of New York said at a press conference that Panther leaders would soon present "absolute scientific proof that Fred Hampton was murdered."

He said "experienced criminologists" went to the shooting scene immediately after police withdrew and made a thorough examination.

Their evidence, Lefcourt said, proves conclusively that police murdered Hampton in an elaborate conspiracy that included drugging the Panther leader with seconal, a sleep-inducing drug.

The seconal claim was first made last Wednesday by Dr. Victor Levine, a former chief pathologist for the Chicago coroner's office who was retained by the Panthers and performed an autopsy on Hampton's body.

Lefcourt refused to say where or when the Panthers would present the evidence.